

Assessments of the Urban Experience: Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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In an essay on the first four novels of Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby*, Susan Willis observes that the temporal focus of these texts "pinpoints strategic moments in black American history during which social and cultural forms underwent disruption and transformation."¹ This statement applies to an even larger extent to Morrison's trilogy *Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*. In *Beloved* and in *Paradise* she explores the transformative impact of historical phenomena such as the Middle Passage, the Reconstruction era, and the Vietnam War. In *Jazz*, Morrison focuses on the impact of the large-scale migration of Southern blacks to the urban metropolis of New York City since the last decades of the nineteenth century and on the quality of the emerging first black urban culture. Depicting the experiences of her cast of characters and probing into their "interior lives,"² she tries to capture and assess the transformative energies of Harlem in the 1920s, at that time "the capital of the Black world."³

For the purpose of such an assessment Morrison employs various narrative techniques, the most conspicuous, of course, her stylistic reliance on elements of jazz music. Yet, in addition to that, her novel is marked by various instances of intertextual dialogue that place the text within a net of predominantly 'classic' modernist texts. Richard Hardack, for example, has shown in which way Faulkner's *Light in August* figures in *Jazz*, and critics like Nicolas F. Pici have argued that the novel presents a modernist sensibility, i.e. a sensibility characterised by a pervasive sense of historical change and cultural flux and fragmentation.⁴

In this essay I shall analyse a further instance of intertextual dialogue with one of the founding texts of literary modernism. In *Jazz* Morrison crosses generic boundaries and engages in a critical intertextual relation-

ship with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a text which like Morrison's novel addresses the urban experience in the aftermath of the First World War. Morrison employs thematic correspondences and a similar narrative technique in order to accomplish a revisionary purpose: while acknowledging the significance of the issues raised in *The Waste Land*, she rejects its inclusiveness of vision. Rather than corroborating the bleak assessment of the postwar urban experience expressed in Eliot's poem she develops a multilayered, more ambiguous picture which is based on the historically and culturally specific experience of African Americans. Morrison's intertextual project can be regarded as an attempt to firmly inscribe the African American presence in this period of North American—or, for that matter, Western—history, culture, and literature.

Morrison's intertextual response to Eliot's text becomes immediately discernible. In its focus on a 'burial of the dead' and on descriptions of the city experience the opening section of *Jazz* evokes the opening section of *The Waste Land*. It becomes obvious that Morrison's and Eliot's texts share a thematically central issue: they are both concerned with the quality of human life and human relationships in the postwar metropolis.

In *The Waste Land* it is the title of the first section, "The Burial of the Dead," a reference to the burial service of the Church of England, which indicates the negative assessment of human experience in the city that permeates the poem as a whole. Human life and human relationships are characterised by a death-in-life quality. The voices which the reader encounters in this section confront him or her predominantly with experiences of loss and betrayal, with memories of unfulfilled sensual and emotional desire, with feelings of despair and hopelessness. Life lacks vitality, beauty, love and joyfulness, and human relationships are characterised by emotional and spiritual sterility.

Jazz opens with the reference to a 'real' burial of the dead. The narrative voice relates the events that surround Dorcas Manfred's funeral, and in doing so also presents a vision of human life characterised by a death-in-life quality. Dorcas Manfred is dead, Joe Trace killed her, and Violet Trace interrupted the funeral and cut the dead woman's face. The killing and the desecration of the corpse mark the culmination of a process of estrangement between Joe and Violet which evokes the two key terms of

the thematically crucial third line of *The Waste Land*: Eliot's city dwellers are haunted by "memory and desire,"⁵ and so are Joe and Violet Trace. Joe's memories of his mother Wild, who rejected him, and his desire to be finally acknowledged motivate his relationship with Dorcas which, however, ends with tracking her down and killing her. Violet's memories of her mother's suicide and a desire to have children cause severe mental problems, a withdrawal from her husband, and her desperate action at the funeral. Both attacks on Dorcas are instances of a desperate search for love. Unable to communicate and thus to share with each other the burden of haunting memories and tormenting desire, they increasingly live lives of emotional isolation. As a couple, the Traces share the experience of the couples in "A Game of Chess," the second section of *The Waste Land*.

Morrison's reference to this burial of the dead thus initially confirms Eliot's negative assessment. A comparison of the respective first city passages of *Jazz* and *The Waste Land*, however, reveals a first major revision of the precursor text. The last part of "The Burial of the Dead" presents the urban metropolis as a place of anonymity, estrangement and silent suffering:

Unreal City,
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
 I had not thought death had undone so many.
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (WL 60-65)

In these lines the negative assessment of human experience, its death-in-life quality, becomes explicit and is, moreover, extended in scope. The masses of city dwellers are perceived as a crowd of people who are no longer distinguishable as individuals and who live burdened, isolated lives. Eliot's allusion to Dante—the phrase "undone" by death refers to a few lines of the *Inferno*—emphasises that they live in a kind of hell. His allusion to the following lines of Baudelaire's poem "Les Septs Vieillards" stresses the omnipresence of suffering in the city and offers a reason for it: "Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Ou le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant." It is 'spectres' of an unbearable past, unbearable memories, that haunt the city dwellers.⁶

The emphatic statement "I'm crazy about this City"⁷ which introduces the first city passage in *Jazz* echoes the beginning of both *The Waste Land* and Baudelaire's poem. Yet, rather than drawing a picture of anonymity, estrangement, and silent suffering, Morrison's narrative voice continues by creating a much more complex scenario. It starts to delineate both the dangers and the opportunities that city life provides for the African American inhabitants of postwar Harlem. As a result, a much more ambiguous assessment of the city experience is presented.

On the one hand the city is depicted as dangerous. There is violence and criminality. The narrative voice points out that it is necessary "to take precaution," to be alert and ready to defend oneself: "[. . .] you have to understand what it's like, taking on a big city: I'm exposed to all sorts of ignorance and criminality" (J 8). On the other hand, however, the city is teeming with opportunity:

The A&P hires a colored clerk. [. . .] Nobody wants to be an emergency at Harlem Hospital but if the Negro surgeon is visiting, pride cuts down the pain. And although the hair of the first class of colored nurses was declared unseemly for the official Bellevue nurse's cap, there are thirty-five of them now—all dedicated and superb in their profession. (J 7-8)

The passage refers to one of the factors that made Harlem so attractive for black migrants from the rural South: economic opportunity. Employment and educational opportunities offered the chance for a better life. James de Jongh, for instance, has pointed out: "Life in New York may have been harsh, but the migrants themselves often came from backgrounds of such extreme poverty and oppression that Harlem, in contrast, seemed to be the Promised Land."⁸

Another city passage which comments on the motivation of the black migrants that pour into the city around the turn of the century and which can be read as a revisionist response to Eliot's London 'crowds,' points toward a second factor that made the city so attractive for African Americans:

However they came, when or why, the minute the leather of their soles hit the pavement—there was no turning around. Even if the room they rented was smaller than the heifer's stall and darker than a morning privy, they stayed to

look at their number, hear themselves in an audience, feel themselves moving down the street among hundreds of others who moved the way they did, and who, when they spoke, regardless of the accent, treated language like the same intricate, malleable toy designed for their play. (J 32-33)

Moving in such a 'crowd' means sharing one's cultural traditions and values with as large a number of people as never before. Despite the fact that racist discrimination continues in the North, life in the city is to a large extent experienced as exhilarating and empowering. Moreover, it has a liberating quality because moving in such large 'crowds' also means unprecedented safety, in de Jongh's words: "[. . .] the relative safety of blacks in Harlem stood in stark contrast to their evident oppression in the rest of the black world."⁹

Related to this aspect of safety are passages which show that Morrison's city dwellers, like Eliot's and Baudelaire's, are also haunted by 'spectres.' However, rather than creating such 'spectres,' the city offers relief from them:

Part of why they loved [the city] was the specter they left behind. The slumped spines of the veterans of the 27th Battalion betrayed by the commander for whom they had fought like lunatics. The eyes of thousands, stupefied with disgust at having been imported by Mr. Armour, Mr. Swift, Mr. Montgomery Ward to break strikes then dismissed for having done so. [. . .] The praying palms, the raspy breathing, the quiet children of the ones who had escaped from Springfield Ohio, Springfield Indiana, Greensburg Indiana, Wilmington Delaware, New Orleans Louisiana, after raving whites had foamed all over the lanes and yards of home. (J 33)

The spectre which haunts the black Harlemites is the spectre of racism. This passage is representative of various others in which Morrison refers to historically specific instances of discrimination, exploitation, and violence. Here she refers to the discriminatory treatment against black soldiers and veterans after the war, to the abuse of black workers as strike breakers, and to some of the large number of lynchings and attacks against black communities. The migrants had been "running from want and violence" (J 33) and despite the fact that racism does not end in the urban north, Harlem nevertheless offers a much higher degree of security.¹⁰

By insisting on historical specificity, Morrison qualifies the inclusiveness of vision which is established in "The Burial of the Dead," an inclusiveness

of vision that characterises *The Waste Land* as a whole. She acknowledges the significance of the issues the poem raises, but at the same time emphasises that it is indispensable to acknowledge differences of experience as well.

In drawing her character Joe Trace, Morrison makes conspicuous use of fish imagery and by means of this introduces a figure that is central to Eliot's *The Waste Land*: the Fisher King. Eliot's concern with the possibility of social, cultural, and spiritual recovery led him to an employment of what he in his famous review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* called the 'mythical method.'¹¹ Eliot incorporated various myths of regeneration in his poem, among them fertility myths in which the figure of the Fisher King is central.¹² The king is impotent, either by illness, by having been wounded, or by old age, and, correspondingly, his land is laid waste, and his people are likewise infertile. The king is waiting to be restored, a task which has to be performed by a stranger who is able to ask or answer certain ritual questions.

A whole series of phrases and passages that contain fish imagery establish Joe as a Fisher King figure. As a young man, still living in the South, Joe is, for example, portrayed as an accomplished fisher. Placed in a pastoral setting he experiences "a couple of hours' spectacular fishing" (J 176). When he leaves the South he gives "away his fishing pole" (J 107), and for one of his first jobs in the city "Joe cleaned fish at night" (J 82). He is linked to Christ, who was able to "feed the world on a fish" (J 120), and in a passage in which Joe remembers trailing Dorcas he twice recalls some women in the beauty parlour who brought "fish dinners" (J 131). To be added to this use of imagery are descriptions of Joe as desolate and devoid of all potency, and the various references that call him 'an old man.' The narrative voice, for example, speculates at length on the effects which the growing awareness that he "isn't young anymore" (J 120f.) may have had on him, and, even more significantly, it is Felice, Dorcas' friend, who repeatedly refers to him as "that old man" (J 201).

Fish imagery is introduced on one of the first pages of the novel. It is used in the first description of the Traces' apartment: "A poisoned silence floated through the rooms like a big fishnet that Violet alone slashed through with loud recriminations." (J 5). The apartment is presented as

a 'land laid waste,' and Joe and Violet, its inhabitants, live a thoroughly 'infertile' life: their marriage is marked by childlessness and by silence, by the inability to talk to each other, especially about their haunting memories and their acute sense of a lack of love. Joe's situation is desperate during the first days of the year 1926. He is introduced as a Fisher King whose life has turned into a failure.

While in *The Waste Land* restoration of the king, his land, and his people is not achieved—the words of the thunder, spoken in the fifth section of the poem, only hint at the possibility of regeneration—, in *Jazz* it is granted. Morrison presents a stranger who is able to ask the Fisher King the necessary question. This stranger is Felice, Dorcas Manfred's friend.¹³ The young woman—whose name alludes to a character in Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* (1929) that also bears redemptive powers—arrives at the Traces' apartment on a day of fine spring weather, marked by an atmosphere of generosity and ease. Her goal is twofold: she wants to find out about the ring she lent Dorcas the night of the killing, and, more significantly, she wants to tell Joe Trace that the intensity of his grief might be unnecessary. She has heard that "the old man was all broke up. Cried all day and all night. Left his job and wasn't good for a thing." (J 204-05) Felice knows that Joe's bullet did not kill Dorcas rightaway. It hit her shoulder, and only because Dorcas rejected help, she bled to death. However, more important than this piece of information is a question Felice asks, the question essential for restoration. She talks to Joe about Dorcas and, ultimately, asks him: "Why'd you shoot at her if you loved her?" (J 213) Joe's—the Fisher King's—restoration depends on coming to terms with the question of how to love. Pondering Felice's question Joe realises that he "[d]idn't know how to love anybody" because he was "scared" (J 213). Since his childhood, since the rejection by his mother Wild, Joe has been haunted by a feeling of worthlessness and, as a result of this, has been scared to lose whatever he loved. This feeling is described as an "inside nothing" (J 37) and points toward the absence of what is vital for being able to love someone: an affirmation of one's self. Joe has to learn the same lesson that Sethe, the protagonist of *Beloved*, has to learn, namely that he is his "best thing."¹⁴

The fact that at least the first steps toward restoration have been taken is hinted at by Felice's remark that she has seen Joe "smile twice now and laugh out loud once" (J 207). And, in addition to this, restoration is signalled by the last image that characterises the Traces' apartment. In contrast to the image of the 'poisoned silence' the apartment is now described as filled by music:

Somebody in the house across the alley put a record on and the music floated in to us through the open window. Mr. Trace moved his head to the rhythm and his wife snapped her fingers in time. She did a little step in front of him and he smiled. By and by they were dancing. (J 214)

While Morrison employs a key concept of *The Waste Land* for the purpose of drawing the character of Joe Trace, she literally improvises upon two of its most enigmatic passages in order to create her character Violet Trace. Violet's story emerges from eighteen lines of section five which bears the title "What the Thunder Said."

What is that sound high in the air
 Murmur of *maternal lamentation*
 Who are those hooded hordes swarming
 Over endless plains, stumbling in *cracked* earth
 Ringed by the flat horizon only
 What is the city over the mountains
 Cracks and reforms and bursts in the *violet air*
 Falling towers
 Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
 Vienna London
 Unreal

A woman drew her long black *hair* out tight
 And fiddled *whisper music* on those strings
 And bats with *baby faces* in the *violet light*
 Whistled, and beat their wings
 And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
 And upside down in air were towers
 Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
 And *voices singing* out of *empty cisterns* and *exhausted wells*.

(WL 366-84; my emphasis)

Important are, first of all, the questions asked in lines 366, 368-69, and 371 because they establish the setting of *Jazz*. The line "What is that sound high in the air" (*WL* 366) refers to the sounds expressive of the migration and city experience which to make sense of is the goal of the narrative voice or voices of *Jazz*. The lines "Who are those hooded hordes swarming / Over endless plains" (*WL* 368-69) can be read as a reference to the large numbers of black migrants that have, for instance, to escape from the Vienna region after their homes and their land have been devastated by fire (cf. *Jazz* 173-74).¹⁵ It is, moreover, echoed by Joe's remark on the recruiting of black workers for the war economy: "They were bringing in swarms of colored to work during the War." (*J* 128) The line "What is the city over the mountains" (*WL* 371) finally sharpens the focus and underlines the centrality of the urban experience.

A closer look at the passage then reveals that Morrison focuses on the experiences of one specific migrant, on the story of Violet Trace. Several words and phrases (those which are marked by italics) refer to crucial details of Violet's life. The "murmur of maternal lamentation" in line 367 and the "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" in line 384 can be read in relation to the suicide of Violet's mother, Rose Dear, a traumatic experience for the girl Violet which is to shape her life as an adult woman. Rose Dear is overcome by the racism and poverty that hits her family during the Reconstruction period. Left alone by a husband who is persecuted because of his political activities, she is unable to care for her five children and for herself and sinks into a depression. Ultimately, she puts an end to her life by throwing herself into a well. Violet watches how she "jumped in the well" (*J* 99) and "never forgot Rose Dear or the place she had thrown herself into" (*J* 100-01).

The haunting memory of this incident—the narrative voice points out that "[t]he well sucked her sleep" (*J* 102)—causes her decision never to have children of her own: "The important thing, the biggest thing Violet got out of that was to never have children" (*J* 102). She fears the consequences of motherhood for herself and for a child. After a few years in the city, however, Violet starts to regret this decision. She begins to long for a child, and imagines this child as "a brightness that could be carried in her arms. Distributed, if need be, into places dark as the bottom of a

well" (J 22). The thematisation of this longing for a child echoes the image of the "bats with baby faces" of line 379 of *The Waste Land* and marks an additional 'improvisation' on the phrase "maternal lamentations."

The word 'crack,' twice used in Eliot's passage (in lines 363 and 366), points toward the central image Morrison uses for the purpose of describing the consequences of Violet's increasing inability to cope with her haunting memories and her acute sense of lack. They manifest themselves in her "private cracks" (J 22). Violet's self 'cracks,' it splits in two. In a long passage in *Jazz* she is sitting in a drugstore, drinking malt beer, thinking about her divided self (cf. J 89-114). One part of herself, the calm and peaceful one—"this Violet"—observes and is disturbed by the other part, the aggressive one—"that Violet." "That Violet" is the one that enters the funeral of Dorcas Manfred and attempts to cut the dead woman's face; it is the one that abruptly sits down in the middle of a street blocking the traffic; and it is the one that loses control over language: "[. . .] Violet had stumbled into a crack or two. Felt the anything-at-all begin in her mouth. Words connected only to themselves pierced an otherwise normal comment" (J 23).¹⁶

The narrative voice describes such instances of 'private cracks' in the following way:

I call them cracks because that is what they were. Not openings or breaks, but dark fissures in the globe light of the day. [. . .] Sometimes when Violet isn't paying attention she *stumbles* onto these cracks, like the time when, instead of putting her left heel forward, she stepped back and folded her legs in order to sit in the street. (J 22-23; my emphasis)

The passage, first of all, echoes lines 368-69 of *The Waste Land*. It identifies Violet as one of those "hooded hordes [. . .] stumbling in cracked earth." Secondly, and even more importantly, Morrison's use of light imagery creates the essential link between her character Violet Trace and what in *The Waste Land* is a quality of light which permeates the passages: it connects the character with the phrases "violet air" (WL 372) and "violet light" (WL 79).

The image of hair—given in line 377 of *The Waste Land*: "A woman drew her long black hair out tight / And fiddled whisper music on those strings"

(WL 377-78)—establishes a final, essential link to Morrison's character. Violet is a hairdresser, a profession to which the reader finds almost innumerable references in *Jazz*. One passage in the novel draws a particularly close connection to the two lines mentioned above. Violet is described pondering over the photo of Dorcas which she has placed on the mantelpiece over the fireplace in the apartment: "When she isn't trying to humiliate Joe, she is admiring the dead girl's hair; when she isn't cursing Joe [. . .] she is having whispered conversations with the corpse in her head" (J 15). These whispered conversations evoke the "whisper music" (WL 378) of *The Waste Land* and present one more 'sound' of the city which Morrison's narrative voice tries to interpret.

Morrison's literary improvisation upon the two passages of *The Waste Land* from which the story of a black woman emerges marks a significant contrast to the 'cubistically' portrayed female figures of Eliot's poem. By 'gendering' a quality of light she insists once more that in order to draw an adequate picture of the modern city experience it is indispensable to inquire into the experience of the individual and her or his social milieu. Her focus on the story of a black woman is of special revisionary importance because it provides insight into an experience totally absent from *The Waste Land*.

Of crucial importance in Morrison's intertextual engagement with Eliot's poem is, finally, the correspondence in terms of narrative perspective. Both texts present a chorus of voices which may be read as distinct or as merging in one single voice. Line 218 of *The Waste Land* introduces the figure of Tiresias which in a note Eliot defines as "the most important personage in the poem"¹⁷ in whom all the others merge. Correspondingly, the ten sections of *Jazz* can be read as the performance of a solo voice. Even if we consider the novel a performance of an ensemble of voices, there is still a dominant voice which becomes identifiable by its self-reflective passages. However, while *The Waste Land* and *Jazz* share this feature of narrative technique, they differ considerably in terms of the authority that is granted their respective dominant voice.

Eliot endows Tiresias with a high degree of authority. He grants him the faculty of 'foretelling,' the capability of predicting human behavior: "Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs / Perceived the scene, and foretold

the rest—" (WL 228-29) Moreover, Eliot continues his note with the statement: "What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem."¹⁸ Tiresias' bleak vision of the typist and "the young man carbuncular" (WL 231), another situation that depicts human contact totally devoid of love or, at least, empathy, must thus be regarded as the final reinforcement of *The Waste Land's* negative assessment of the postwar urban experience. In contrast to this, Morrison's dominant narrative voice experiences its fallibility. At the end of the novel the three remaining protagonists, Joe, Violet, and Felice, refuse to comply with its 'plotting': their relationship does not lead to the predicted disaster, but gains a creative, life-sustaining quality. The narrative voice is forced to acknowledge: "I missed the people altogether. [. . .] I was sure one would kill the other. [. . .] I was so sure it would happen. That the past was an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack and no power on earth could lift the arm that held the needle." The voice's insight that these city dwellers have turned out to be "original, complicated, changeable" (J 220) marks Morrison's final major transformation of Eliot's text. Its negative assessment of the postwar urban experience is rejected by means of an insistence on human possibility.

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NOTES

¹Susan Willis, "Eruptions of Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison," *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience* (London: Routledge, 1990) 85.

²Morrison coins this term in "The Site of Memory," *Inventing the Truth: the Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 111. In this essay as in various others she claims that it is especially important to articulate the psychological dimension of the experiences of African Americans since this aspect has been neglected for too long a time.

³This term refers to the eminent cultural significance of Harlem after the First World War, to the intellectual and artistic movement of the *Harlem Renaissance*. See, for example, Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (London: Oxford UP, 1971), esp. chapter 1 "Harlem: Capital of the Black World," 13-51. Morrison does not focus on

the milieu of intellectuals and artists, but she employs various allusions, and especially her narrative technique, her employment of elements of jazz, conveys the creative spirit of the age.

⁴Richard Hardack, "'A Music Seeking Its Words': Double-Timing and Double-Consciousness in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," *Callaloo* 18.2 (1995): 451-71; Nicolas F. Pici, "Trading Meanings: The Breath of Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," *Connotations* 7.3 (1997/98): 395.

⁵T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 3. *The Waste Land* was first published as a monograph in 1922 (New York: Boni and Liveright); the edition I use for this essay is *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

⁶In his "Notes on *The Waste Land*" Eliot refers to these two sources himself. The reference to Dante is: Inferno III, 55-57 (see note to line 63).

⁷Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) 7.

⁸James de Jongh, *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 6.

⁹De Jongh 7.

¹⁰Cf. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Making of America* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1971) 126-55.

¹¹For Eliot's definition of 'myth' as a time-transcending means of ordering and giving significance to human experience see his famous review of James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "Ulysses, Order and Myth," *The Dial* (1923): 480-83.

¹²Crucial for Eliot's technique is, as he himself acknowledges in his "Notes to *The Waste Land*," Jessie L. Weston's study on the origins of the grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance* [1920] (New York: Doubleday, 1957).

¹³Felice bears some of the traits Weston identifies in her study: she resembles, for instance, the type of hero who "takes the place of a knight mysteriously slain in his company" (Weston 12), and embodies the "youthful" type of hero (cf. Weston 15).

¹⁴Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987) 273. Joe's lack of an affirmation of self is a variation on the theme that preoccupies Morrison in *Beloved* and in *Jazz*, the theme of self-sabotage. Reflecting upon the motivation of Margaret Garner, the slave woman who killed her children rather than have them taken back to slavery, Morrison comments: "She had placed all of the value of her life in something outside herself." The same holds true for the young Harlem woman, the model for the character of Dorcas Manfred in *Jazz*, who died rather than reveal the name of the man who shot her. Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison, "A Conversation," *Southern Review* 2 (1985): 584.

¹⁵This is how Joe Trace describes the events: "One week of rumors, two days of packing, and nine hundred Negroes, encouraged by guns and hemp, left Vienna, rode out of town on wagons or walked on their feet to who knew (or cared) where." (J 173-74).

¹⁶Important to note with respect to Violet's 'cracks' is that the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* contains an unpublished poem which Eliot wrote in 1914 and which he used as a source for lines 366 to 384. The poem presents a woman who bears striking resemblance to Morrison's character Violet as she seems to be haunted by nightmarish visions and as a result loses her language. Compare, especially, line three (with

variants): "Concatenated words wherefrom/from which/whereof the sense had/ seemed/was gone." T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land. A Facsimile Edition and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 113-15.

¹⁷Eliot, *The Waste Land*, note to line 70.

¹⁸Eliot, *The Waste Land*, note to line 70; emphasis in the original.

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